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ABSTRACT

The relationship between the Flint (Michigan) Board of Education and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation began in 1935 with a $6,000 grant. The relationship between the two organizations has made Flint the national laboratory for community education programs. Through the years, the Flint community schools have requested and received Mott Foundation grants totaling over $100 million that have enabled them to develop innovative programs and to offer an impressive array of educational, cultural, social, medical, and recreational opportunities based on the needs of the residents. Today everyone of the 52 schools in Flint is a community school. Thousands of educators from all over the world have visited Flint to study community education firsthand. Current estimates are that 40 percent of American public schools now offer some variation of community schools. In large part, this is due to the influence of the Flint experiment. (Author/MLF)

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Technical Assistance Bulletin

Flint, Michigan, Community Schools

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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Summary

In 1935, the Flint Board of Education wanted to provide an afterschool recreation program for the children of Flint. They requested and were given a $6,000 grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation for this program. That began a relationship between the two organizations which has made Flint the national laboratory for community education programs. Through the years, the Flint community schools have requested and received Mott Foundation grants totaling over $100 million which has enabled them to develop innovative programs and to offer an impressive array of educational, cultural, social, medical, and recreational opportunities based on the needs of the residents. Today everyone of the 52 schools in Flint is a community school. Thousands of educators from all over the world have visited Flint to study community education firsthand.

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Program

A community school is a method of using the school as the center of neighborhood educational, recreational, social, cultural and human services. This approach is designed to meet the needs of diverse community members. It is based on the premise that local resources can be drawn together, in a central location, to assist in solving neighborhood problems. The community education philosophy sees the school as a service center operating in partnership with other groups in the community.

"The Community Is The Classroom" is the philosophy of education guiding the Flint Community Schools. As the publication by the same name states:

> It is a formula proclaiming that life's experiences are an important part of education and a school system cannot exist isolated from other aspects of life in the city. The distressing influences affecting the learner are prime concerns for community education as it provides programs and services to improve the quality of life and as it involves the citizen in the identification and solution to those problems.

As the major recipient of grants from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Flint Community Schools operate a wide variety of programs and serices. Flint has become a national laboratory for community education, through the willingness of its school staff to conceive of and experiment with community school programs and the generosity of the Mott Foundation in funding these experiments. The relationship between the two organizations based in Flint, Michigan, has lasted more than four decades and is unique in the foundation world.

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The Flint community school system has 34,000 students and 52 school facilities. Each community school in Flint has one full-time director. The community school director works in the afternoons, the evenings, and the summers. The duties of the community school director are determined by the characteristics and needs of the community served by the school. It is the responsibility of every community school director to know the children and the families living within the boundaries of the school. He or she must also know the human resources available within the community as well as within the city at large. The community school director may be involved with--

- Block clubs
- After-hours educational, recreational, and social enrichment activities
- Family Education and counseling
- Civic affairs
- Health Clinics and forums
- Counseling
- Senior citizens activities
- Ethnic programs
- Home visitations.

Every school has a School-Community Advisory Council (SCAC) composed of representatives from the school staff and the community. The principal, assistant principal, and other members of the school staff work with the community school director in planning programs and coordinating resources.

Each community school in Flint has an individual program tailored to the needs of the area in which it is located. A school in a lower income neighborhood might schedule resources from the county health department to provide innoculations. Babysitting services might be provided in the same lower income neighborhood, while residents of a more affluent neighborhood might prefer to use private babysitters.

Some programs are offered at all schools. Each elementary school offers a "Tot Lot" during the summer. The Tot Lot is a structured, supervised play program for young children. Activities are structured into theme weeks such as space week, health and safety week, pets and plants week, farm week, and community helpers week. Tot Lots emphasize the preparation of small children for school through the development of skills, self-expression, participation, coorperation, and self-confidence.

Flint does not have court ordered bussing, but it does have an extensive program of bussing using a magnet school system patterned somewhat after the Dallas magnet school system. In the magnet system, schools are designed to specialize in different areas. In Flint, there are foreign language schools, math schools, art schools, and schools which specialize in global education. There is also a high school of medical science. There is an "academy" which is a traditional, strict school. There is an "open school" which is very liberal. Parents choose the school which best suits their child. Bussing is provided for all Flint children to the school of their choice.

One of the criticisms people make of bussing is that it destroys the sense of community which a neighborhood school builds. This is not a problem in Flint because of the community school arrangement. Children are encouraged to enjoy all the programs at their neighborhood community school after they finish their academic work at the school of their choice. Thus, Flint families have the benefits of the educational system which best suits their child, plus the benefits of a strong neighborhood community school.

There are many innovative programs in the Flint Community Schools, including--

- The Academic Olympics--an academically oriented "game" approach to instruction that utilizes a sports-like atmosphere to encourage academic achievement. The Academic Olympics provides additional educational experiences for children during the summer vacation months.
- A Foreign Language Program--including Arabic, Japanese, Chinese, Danish, Greek, and Ukranian. Ethnic organizations have requested classes to promote their cultural backgrounds. The Flint International Institute offers special youth enrichment classes which offer students the chance to learn and retain their ancestral

languages. Nearly 40 different nationalities are represented in the City of Flint. The long-range goal of the Foreign Language Program is to provide classes in each of these national languages for all Flint residents.

- Senior Citizens Services--a program of the Flint Community Schools based at each of the neighborhood schools and several additional activity areas. Meetings and activities at each school are determined by the desires of that particular senior citizens group. There are educational programs, hobby programs, and programs in which the senior citizens provide service to other groups in Flint. Flint's Mobile Meals program, which provides home delivery of nutritious meals to ill and handicapped elderly persons, is based in the senior citizens centers.

- REACH, the Runaway Emergency Action Center Hotline--serves the 1,200 runaways each year in Genessee County, Michigan. Each community school refers runaways and potential runaways to the REACH Hotline, which has a counselor on duty 24 hours a day. REACH provides emergency counseling and shelter for up to 15 days. Crisis intervention and family mediation counseling is focused towards the runaway's return home. Ongoing family counseling is provided after the youth returns home.

- Preschool Story Hour--a service of the Flint Board of Education and the Flint Public Library. Story hours are held for preschool children once each week in the community schools. Hours are scheduled in the evening for working parents and during the day for parents at home. While the children attend story hour, the parents participate in adult education activities.

- Urban Environment Program--a program in each community school which encourages local youth and adults to improve the physical environment of Flint. Any club, group, or organization can obtain help for environmental improvement programs through the Urban Environment Program. There are currently 25 adult environment classes in subjects such as indoor gardening, landscaping and lawn maintenance, and flower arrangements. Green Thumb Club classes are held in elementary schools. Sixty youth enrichment classes are offered. Several day camp activities are offered during the summer. Each community school has a committee to improve the school site. The Urban Environment Program provides professionally developed site and landscape design plans, planting materials at wholesale prices, and supervises landscaping procedures on "parent work days" at each community school. The Urban Environment staff assists the school committees in developing low-cost, "do-it-yourself" playground equipment made from cast-off materials.

- Police-School Cadets Program--a program at each Flint elementary school which invites fourth grade boys and girls to join a "club" which provides instruction about the law, the law enforcement profession, and municipal government. Cadets receive instruction about the Flint Police Division, school safety, juvenile delinquency, bicycle safety, firearm safety, and crime. A plainclothed police officer leads the instructional program. A uniformed officer supervises other club activities. Parent participation is emphasized.

Results

Community Education programs operate until ten o'clock every night at the 52 community schools in Flint, Michigan. Flint schools have not suffered the increasing violence, vandalism, and delinquency which has afflicted the rest of the nation during the 1970's. During the period 1973-1976, homicides, robberies, assaults on teachers and students, burglaries of school buildings, and drug and alcohol offenses on school property were all lower than national statistics. During the school year 1975-76, the

average daily attendance rate was 88 percent. Year round teen recreation and enrichment programs have a positive effect. Youth representation on all community advisory councils contributes to the low rates of violence and vandalism by assuring that community programs meet the needs of students. Little vandalism occurs before ten o'clock due to the presence of so many adults in the community schools until that time. Most vandalism is glass breakage. In addition, Flint community schools operate police-school liaison programs designed to foster understanding between students and police officers. A police/school liaison program uses a plainclothes policeman to investigate community acts of delinquency, to counsel school youths as a deterrent to crime, and to enforce security when required in the school.

Community schools around the nation are frequently placed to serve minority and/or lower income neighborhood groups.

Replication Issues

Research Triangle Institute of Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina performed a National Assessment of Community Education in 1976. At that time, more than 36 percent of the schools in the national survey offered some sort of community school program. The school districts studied were in substantial agreement on the minimum criteria for classification as a community education program:

1. The school district must have an established citizen's advisory group.
2. The board of education must have a formal board resolution in support of Community Education.
3. The schools must support cooperation and coordination with other community resources.
4. The district must engage in a formal neighborhood needs assessment to determine programs to meet community needs.
5. The district must integrate its K-12 programs with community education.
6. A community school director must be supplied to each school and work at least half-time at that school.

Required Resources

Community schools have higher costs for utilities, personnel, insurance and maintenance. Some parts of community school programs are self-supporting, but costs for the staff and some program support must be budgeted by the county government, the department of recreation, or the school system.

References

For answers to more specific questions, or to arrange a visit to the Flint Community Schools, call or write the office of--

Conferences and Visitations
Flint Community Schools
923 East Kearsley Street
Flint, Michigan 48502
(313) 762-1213

An intensive 2-week training course in community school management is offered by the National Center for Community Organization, a private group which is supported by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. For information, contact--

Dr. Dwane Brown, Director
National Center for Community Education
1017 Avon Street
Flint, Michigan 48503
(313) 238-0463

Brochures, pamphlets, media packages, and reprints of articles are available to schools interested in community school programs from the following organization:

National Clearinghouse for
Community Education
Marion Kratage, Director
6011 Executive Blvd.
Rockville, Maryland 02850

There is an organization for schools which have or are interested in starting a community schools program. The $40 annual membership fee includes a newsletter, a journal, and notice of the annual convention.

National Association for
Community Education
Paul Tremper, Executive Director
1030 15th Street, N.W.
Suite 536
Washington, DC 20005
(800) 424-8874

Publications

Minzey, Jack. Community Education From Program To Process. Midland, Michigan: Pendell Publishing, 1976.

Seay, Maurice. Community Education: A Developing Process. Midland, Michigan: Pendell Publishing, 1977.

Decker, Larry. People Helping People: An Overview of Community Education. Midland, Michigan: Pendall Publishing, 1976